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3 **Bumper 8**

4 **50th Anniversary of the First Launch on Cape**  
5  
6 **Canaveral**

7 **Mr. Edward G. Belcher's Oral History**  
8  
9 **Kennedy Space Center**

10  
11 **Held September 24, 2000**  
12

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14  
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24 **Kennedy Space Center**  
25

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All redlines from all participants have been incorporated in this transcription  
as of March 2, 2001

1 Roger Launius: Ok, My name is Roger Launius. It's the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, we're in  
2 Indialantic interviewing Ed Belcher about the Bumper Project. Ed, if you would please,  
3 could you just begin by giving us, I know you wrote a short biography, but could you  
4 give me your name, the spelling of your name for the transcriptionist, and then a little  
5 background about your life before Bumper.

6  
7 Ed Belcher: Edward G. B-e-l-c-h-e-r. Born 8/31/21. Pittsfield, Massachusetts. I called  
8 Dalton, Massachusetts my home, years ago. My mother died when I was 5 years old,  
9 so I lived with my grandmothers, aunts and uncles, and that was it. So, passed the time  
10 until such time that I went into the service.

11  
12 Launius: Ok, when did you go into the service?

13  
14 Belcher: 3 June 1940

15  
16 Launius: And you were how old at that point?

17  
18 Belcher: 18

19  
20 Launius: Eighteen years old, just out of high school?

21  
22 Belcher: Not really.

23  
24 Launius: Ok

1 Launius: Why did you go into the military?

2  
3 Belcher: In those days, there wasn't much to do, other than that in the particular time in  
4 1940 in this country. Well, I enlisted for the artillery in Massachusetts and they sent me  
5 to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. This was supposed to be motorized artillery. The second  
6 day I was there, I talked to the sergeant and asked him where our vehicles were and he  
7 said we'll show you in a few minutes. So he took us out and showed us 500 mules.  
8 And that's what we were in. What is known as the Mountain Pack Artillery carrying  
9 American 75MM howitzers.

10  
11 Launius: Ok

12  
13 Belcher: That's where I started. I stayed in the outfit till. Let me see when did I  
14 transfer. Oh, yeah, till we went overseas 15<sup>th</sup> of March of 1942.

15  
16 Launius: '42?

17  
18 Belcher: 1942, when the war broke out.

19  
20 Launius: Where did you go?

21  
22 Belcher: Where did we go? New Caledonia, Noumea, the Mea Valley so forth. We  
23 went over in a transport with nothing but us. It was...

24  
25 Launius: Did the mules go with you on that transport?

1  
2 Belcher: No, no, no, no, the mules, the horses came later

3  
4 Launius: OK

5  
6 Belcher: We went to Noumea and we worked unloading the ships there. About four or  
7 five months later our horses came in from some where in the Dutch area. In an  
8 area...and about a month later the mules came in from the Second Field in Panama,  
9 which was the same kind of outfit we were in.

10  
11 Launius: This was rather an unusual unit, wasn't it? There weren't many like this in the  
12 Army.

13  
14 Belcher: Well, one time there was the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain which was in Italy, the 2<sup>nd</sup> which  
15 was in Panama broke up, I think, then, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery was in Fort Bragg , then  
16 we were also in 97<sup>th</sup> Field was at Fort Bragg.

17  
18 Launius: And, um, you had them. It's very interesting you had mules, we think of WWII  
19 as a mechanized war.

20  
21 Belcher: That's right, yeah.

22  
23 Launius: But I do know they used them pretty extensively in the Pacific especially in the  
24 mountainous regions and in the jungles.

1 Belcher: Uh-huh.

2  
3 Launius: This was a one stop unit, wasn't it? I mean, you had the artillery, you cared  
4 for the animals, you moved the artillery from place to place, you set it up, you fired it as  
5 appropriate, you broke it down, you carried it to some place else. Is that how it worked?

6  
7 Belcher: Yes, that's about right.

8  
9 Launius: Are there any specific incidents or stories about those experiences that you  
10 would like to share with us.

11  
12 Belcher: Well, sometimes they're hard to get along with, the mules.

13  
14 Launius :Ok

15  
16 Belcher: 19..let me see I can't remember the year it was, I think it was '42, we brought  
17 them all into position at night and we had to adjust our cinches and so forth what we  
18 carrying, we were near a train station and unbeknownst to us, they blew the whistle in  
19 the train station and the mules went in every direction but the right one. And we had  
20 quite a time, a stampede and round them up so we could go in position.

21  
22 Launius: So you had to chase the mules all over town?

23  
24 Belcher: 10-4

1 Launius: [Laughter]. Ok, I have a note here that talks about Guadalcanal and South  
2 Pacific battle zones. What were those like to a young fellow like yourself; going from  
3 Massachusetts literally half way around the world. What were the experiences like?  
4 And how did it set with you?

5  
6 Belcher: Well, I don't know... Let me see you talking about Guadalcanal now right?  
7 Well, it's a little on your mind. So, a little different but we were only one small unit there.  
8 And we went in there. The island wasn't secure but in the meantime it would have been  
9 shortly while we were there. We did put our guns up on the mountain side somewhere  
10 and waiting to find the enemy if we could find him but he found us first.

11  
12 Launius: Oh really?

13  
14 Belcher: Yes, sir. Every day about 3:30, 4:00 the artillery would shoot at us but they  
15 didn't hit us but they came close. The next day we'd go through the same thing, they 'd  
16 shoot at us again but they didn't hit us. This went on till the fourth day they got close  
17 enough so we left.

18  
19 Launius: Ok, so in the interim, 3 days you didn't move.

20  
21 Belcher: No, they couldn't hit us. We were under the impression that they were some  
22 where in the jungle and the trees were stopping them from moving the traverse of their  
23 gun so that they could get to us. But they did. Nobody was hurt, none of our boys were  
24 hurt. We made it off. Then of course, getting less in the infantry we'd get tangled up  
25 with the snipers more or less just a couple of days and that would go away.

1  
2 Launius: Ok, alright. The experiences of WWII are pretty powerful in most people's  
3 memories. Would you say they affected your outlook through the rest of your life and if  
4 so how?

5  
6 Belcher: Oh I don't know. No, not really I'm a strange person, you know, about stuff like  
7 that. Didn't bother me a bit.

8  
9 Launius: Ok, alright. Um...at what point. When you were in the service, you were  
10 overseas, for how much time during WWII? The entire war?

11  
12 Belcher: 38 months.

13  
14 Launius: 38 months?

15  
16 Belcher: 38 months.

17  
18 Launius: And you were in the Pacific for part of that. Where you any where else?

19  
20 Belcher: All of it.

21  
22 Launius: Ok, whereabouts?

23  
24 Belcher: I was in Noumea in the "Canal". That's all.  
25



1 Launius: Ok

2  
3 Belcher: And then when we came back from the canal. See, all of our outfit didn't go to  
4 Guadalcanal. Only one battery. So we came back and joined the unit. But we didn't  
5 bring the mules or horses with us. They were loaded on to a ship and they went to the  
6 China - Burma theater where they were really needed from the start but they never got  
7 there. I sometimes think it's because of the Coral Sea battle. But I'm not sure, that's  
8 just what I think.

9  
10 Launius: They did not arrive? They were lost at sea?

11  
12 Belcher: Oh no, no , no.

13  
14 Launius: What happened to them?

15  
16 Belcher: They were alright.

17  
18 Launius: Oh, ok.

19  
20 Belcher: But I think that's where they were headed for originally. But they came in New  
21 Caledonia with us. And you know.

22  
23 Launius: Oh I see. Alright. What other places were you at during the war.

24  
25 Belcher: That's it.

1  
2 Launius: OK.

3  
4 Launius: When you returned from overseas after the war, you stayed in the military?

5  
6 Belcher: No

7  
8 Launius: You got out?

9  
10 Belcher: Yes, The war was still on when I arrived back in the United States. They sent  
11 me back for rehabilitation after so long a time. After three years. I went to Fort  
12 Devons, Massachusetts around the 12<sup>th</sup> of May '45.

13  
14 Launius: Alright. Ok

15  
16 Belcher: And of course, the war was over, what? the 13<sup>th</sup> of May?

17  
18 Launius: Right

19  
20 Belcher: In Europe.

21  
22 Launius: In Europe.

23  
24 Belcher: Right. So I had the privilege of either staying in or getting out of the service.  
25 So at that particular time I chose to get out of the service.

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Launius: Ok. So you went home at that point.

Belcher: Yeah.

Launius: But you re-upped then again a little later on.

Belcher: 20 months later.

Launius: And you joined up and what were you going to do when you joined up?

Belcher: Well, I thought I was going to Alaska but I got as far as New Jersey. And they put me as a basic training instructor. Taking the rookies. For about 2 years I was there then.

Launius: Ok

Belcher: Then from then I went to school for 14 weeks at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, as an installer/repairman. Then after 14 weeks I returned back to Fort Dix again for basic training outfit.

Launius: Ok. Install and repair of what?

Belcher: Telephones, wire, switchboard.

1 Launius: Ok

3 Belcher: Telephone wires and cable.

5 Launius: Alright. So that was your first entrance into the communication stuff.

7 Belcher: Well, not really. When I was in the mule pack, I was a wireman.

9 Launius: Ok

11 Belcher: That's how we out with the mules. Packed them out with the wires on their  
12 backs. Where did we go from there? Oh, that's right too. Well, anyway, We came back  
13 and I was in the Basic again. A Basic instructor for awhile. And then, I in turn found a  
14 position for me in Fort Reno, Oklahoma. They were looking for animal handlers.

16 Launius: Alright.

18 Belcher: So I in turn volunteered not knowing what I was doing at the time. Matter of  
19 fact, I didn't even know where Fort Reno was. So I proceeded to be transferred to Fort  
20 Reno, Oklahoma, where we had 10,000 mules. And a few thousand horses. So I was  
21 one of the persons that was chosen to bring 800 mules each time to New Orleans,  
22 Westwego, outside of New Orleans. Then we loaded them on the ship and take them to  
23 Selonica, Greece and Athens, Greece. Then back to the states and I did that for a year  
24 and a half. I made six trips over and back.

1 Launius: To Europe?

3 Belcher: Yup.

5 Launius: What were they sending them to Europe for? To Selonica?

7 Belcher: I imagine to fight the Communists up in the hills.

9 Launius: Ok.

11 Belcher: We gave mules to the Greeks.

13 Launius: So these were trained pack animals? Like you were used to?

15 Belcher: No, they weren't pack animals. They had to be trained. They were wild. A  
16 little bit wild.

18 Launius: Well, how were they to deal with as opposed to the ones you trained?

20 Belcher: Well, there's quite a bit of difference. Of course, a mule as long as you're  
21 watching him he not going to hurt you but if you walk by and turn your head the other  
22 way, he might kick you or two. They are temperamental, you know.

24 Launius: So, it's true what they say about them being stubborn and ornery?

1 Belcher: Yes, yes. We took over 800 each time mules.

2  
3 Launius: What... How did you end up working on the Bumper project?

4  
5 Belcher: How did I work? I went on one trip to Okinawa. We took 700 horses, and 50  
6 stallions and when I returned the base where I was at, closed out all the animals, closed  
7 down. So I was sent back to New Jersey, which was Fort Monmouth, where I was  
8 originally left. I went back there and they told me I was going to go to Anawetok.

9  
10 Launius: Ok

11  
12 Belcher: Nice place to go to. But anyway, I had just arrived back in the States off a  
13 ship and so I wasn't eligible. So they said we got a good place for you, we're going to  
14 ship you down to Florida and I thought that was nice.

15  
16 Launius: So was this in '49 or 1950?

17  
18 Belcher: That was Feb. '50.

19  
20 Launius: Ok

21  
22 Belcher: Thought it would be nice. I liked Miami. (Laughter)!

23  
24 Launius: Ok

1 Belcher: So here I are.

2  
3 Launius: So you came down., How did you come down?

4  
5 Belcher: (Laughter), Well,

6  
7 Launius: You've got to tell the story.

8  
9 Belcher: Yeah, we went into New Jersey to fly down, February. The first two tries,  
10 conditions were so icy we couldn't quite make it. So the third one we made the flight  
11 down. They paid us by check, as we got on the plane. No money, no cigarettes, no  
12 fun. Anyway, we couldn't even smoke. So we down to Patrick, went right on by it.  
13 Someone at Patrick, or the Air Force or whoever never gave the pilot permission to land  
14 at Patrick Air Force Base.

15  
16 Launius: So you didn't have the clearance to land.

17  
18 Belcher: Right. So we went to Titusville and landed.

19  
20 Launius: Ok.

21  
22 Belcher: With winter coats on and jackets and underwear all in this thing. And hats,  
23 helmets. Then we had to find a way to get from Titusville to Patrick.

24  
25 Launius: How many people were with you?

1

2 Belcher: 43

3

4 Launius: 43 people on this flight?

5

6 Belcher: And one officer.

7

8 Launius: Ok. So it was a unit that was coming down?

9

10 Belcher: Well, we were made a unit up there. We weren't a unit until this one came in  
11 and that one came in.

12

13 Launius: Ok

14

15 Belcher: I think it was the 519<sup>th</sup>. Something like that.

16

17 Launius: Alright. So when you arrived down here it was February. It was winter  
18 obviously in New Jersey and winter down here too..but the winter here what was the  
19 weather like?

20

21 Belcher: Beautiful, beautiful.

22

23 Launius: Temperatures in the 70's? Just gorgeous?

24

25 Belcher: When you come from zero to here it's got to be better.



1  
2 Launius: (Laughter)! So how did you get from Titusville down to Patrick?

3  
4 Belcher: I guess, our captain talked to this one and that one and went through the  
5 channels, I guess until they found out it was really so. And somebody. Then sent some  
6 buses over to pick us up.

7  
8 Launius: Ok

9  
10 Belcher: A few hours wait.

11  
12 Launius: Ok, so you sat around cooling your heels for a few hours.

13  
14 Belcher: Yes we did.

15  
16 Launius: They brought you down to Patrick. Where did they quarter you?

17  
18 Belcher: How familiar are you with it?

19  
20 Launius: None, not at all.

21  
22 Belcher: Here we go. Ok. Do you know where the gas station is down in Patrick?

23  
24 Launius: I don't know where anything is down in Patrick.

1 Belcher: How will I tell you? Have you been up and down A1A?

3 Launius: Yes.

5 Belcher: Going South, you go by, all of a sudden if you look over, I don't know if you  
6 can see it or not. After you go past the main gate, you go down and there's a hanger ,  
7 you can see a hanger, the door looks out towards A1A. Well, they let us off there not by  
8 the hangar but by the barracks near the hangar and that's where we stayed. Till we  
9 were relieved, you know, and our equipment was left right across the road from the  
10 barracks.

12 Launius: What was the barracks like?

14 Belcher: Nice!

16 Launius: Oh, it was?

18 Belcher: Sure.

20 Launius: Ok

22 Belcher: No air conditioning but who did in those days in barracks?

24 Launius: I don't think they had it much.

1 Belcher: No we didn't. It was alright. It was better than the wooden ones we had up  
2 north.

3  
4 Launius: Oh really?

5  
6 Belcher: Oh yes.

7  
8 Launius: What was it, was it made from wood or brick?

9  
10 Belcher: Oh no. It's still there. It's brick but it's air conditioned and fixed up all nice.  
11 It's real nice now.

12  
13 Launius: Ok

14  
15 Belcher: I go look at it every now and then.

16  
17 Launius: Brings back memories?

18  
19 Belcher: Memories, yes.

20  
21 Launius: Ok. Were you married by this time?

22  
23 Belcher: No.

24  
25 Launius: Ok. So you didn't have to worry about a spouse coming down with you.

1  
2 Belcher: Not right away, no. She was already here.

3  
4 Launius: Oh?

5  
6 Belcher: I married a girl from Fort Kent, Maine. You don't know where that is either.

7  
8 Launius: No I don't.

9  
10 Belcher: Well, that's way up by the Canadian border.

11  
12 Launius: Ok

13  
14 Belcher: Who came down here to visit and stay for awhile with her aunt and uncle. We  
15 met and so we were married down here.

16  
17 Launius: So that was after you arrived. So what was the area like when you first got  
18 here in 1950. I've heard a variety of things about it. It was obviously much less...

19  
20 Belcher: There's no bugs down here. What do they call them? Uh, uh, well,  
21 mosquitoes but they're out there but only at night I didn't have any trouble. Everybody  
22 says they were loaded with it. I don't know where they came from. They didn't bother  
23 me except a night. When the sun goes down they...

24  
25 Launius: The bugs come out?

1  
2 Belcher: They came out. But otherwise a few rattlesnakes here and there. But  
3 otherwise we didn't have any trouble with them.  
4

5 Launius: Um  
6

7 Belcher: Love bugs, now I never saw a love bug. I don't think there were any love bugs  
8 down here at that time. People say there was where they were at I don't know because  
9 I was all over Florida, Merritt Island, Cocoa, and every place else.  
10

11 Launius: So you didn't find the insects were a particular problem?  
12

13 Belcher: No.  
14

15 Launius: Not even in the summertime?  
16

17 Belcher: No.  
18

19 Launius: Ok. Did you have a sense that you were really in a fundamentally different  
20 part of the United States when you arrived here then what you 'd been used to in  
21 Massachusetts?  
22

23 Belcher: Well, not really because I'd been in so many places. I was in the Pacific  
24 where it's nice and warm, I was in the Oklahoma where it's nice and cold, you know  
25

1 what I mean. I lived in Massachusetts which is mighty cold. I visited Florida before, so I  
2 don't think it make a big difference to me.

3  
4 Launius: Ok

5  
6 Belcher: I accepted it for what it is.

7  
8 Launius: Alright , that's fair enough. Do you have any specific impressions of Cape  
9 Canaveral when you first came here?

10  
11 Belcher: Well...(Laughter) What Cape Canaveral? There was nothing there as far as  
12 I'm concerned.

13  
14 Launius: Ok.

15  
16 Belcher: Sandy road that we worked on going out to the Cape from the base, but. And  
17 I never, people ask me about it, I never went out to that area other than the lighthouse.  
18 When I was free to do what I wanted to, I always went to Melbourne and south.

19  
20 Launius: Ok, alright. What was a typical day when you were working on the Bumper  
21 project out here?

22  
23 Belcher: 6:00 in the morning.

24  
25 Launius: You got up about 6?

1

2 Belcher: No, we got to work at 6.

3

4 Launius: Oh, you went to work at 6. OK

5

6 Belcher: On the road from the Cape all the way to the Bumper.

7

8 Launius: Ok.

9

10 Belcher: 5:00 we'd come back at night.

11

12 Launius: Ok.

13

14 Belcher: Climbing poles, stringing cables all the way out.

15

16 Launius: You were running communication lines, is that correct?

17

18 Belcher: Yup,yup

19

20 Launius: From the launch pad back to where?

21

22 Belcher: No, up towards, I don't know where we ended up at to tell you the truth. See,  
23 a lot of things there are two crews working. One's doing one thing and another doing  
24 another but they're both the same thing when you get down to it. Where they started I  
25 don't know but I know where we started. We started out at the Cape coming back.

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Launius: Ok, so this was a communication system that was going to be used for the Cape? Alright. What was a typical day? You started work about 6. You basically went. Did you put the poles in the ground yourselves? Did somebody else do that for you?

Belcher: No, no.

Launius: You did the whole thing start to finish?

Belcher: We did not put in poles.

Launius: And strung them back.

Belcher: Yes, but we did other things. Sometimes we worked down at right at the base itself. They were checking out. Because it was new, you know, to the Air Force. So we worked some of the cables, checking them back in the main cable frame and stuff like that. There were other things to do besides just to the base out there.

Launius: Ok. Alright. He's handed me a...

Belcher: Picture

Launius: A photograph that you are well familiar with. What are we looking at here?



1 Belcher: This we built for the Coast Guard, that's where the gentleman...I don't know  
2 how he did it. But the four of us built a 100 foot tower.

3  
4 Launius: Ok, 100 foot tower.

5  
6 Belcher: It was a beacon of some sort we put in for the Coast Guard.

7  
8 Launius: Ok, so what, was there a light at the top of it?

9  
10 Belcher: Pardon? I don't know whether it was a light. It was a light, I know but 100  
11 foot. But some kind of a signal put out. Because you had a light up here in the  
12 lighthouse. That's what it was.

13  
14 Launius: Ok. What was it made out of?

15  
16 Belcher: The tower?

17  
18 Launius: Yes. Was it wood?

19  
20 Belcher: Aluminum...Steel

21  
22 Launius: Ok. How long did it take you to do it?

1 Belcher: Once we got there and got it all together, it wasn't too bad. But we got three  
2 legs of it together and the next leg somebody gave us a wrong one. It wouldn't fit. It  
3 was short. We would have had a short cable, like the leaning tower of Pisa.  
4

5 Launius: Ok  
6

7 Belcher: So anyway, I had to go to Ponce de Leon lighthouse and bring it back. And I  
8 guess, it's maybe, the most it could have taken was 4 days.  
9

10 Launius: Ok In a typical day down there in the summertime, did you work all day or  
11 take a break , you know at noon and wait till the sun...  
12

13 Belcher: No  
14

15 Launius: No, you didn't do the siesta kind of thing?  
16

17 Belcher: No, we weren't down in Mexico. We were in Florida.  
18

19 Launius: Ok, fair enough.  
20

21 Belcher: Everybody congregated out here, you know. That's where they fed us out  
22 here.  
23

24 Launius: Ok. So they brought food out every day?  
25

1 Belcher: Oh, yeah.  
2  
3 Launius: Was it hot meals or sandwiches?  
4  
5 Belcher: Yup.  
6  
7 Launius: A little bit of everything. Ok  
8  
9 Belcher: Very good.  
10  
11 Launius: It was?  
12  
13 Belcher: As far as I'm concerned.  
14  
15 Launius: Ok.  
16  
17 Belcher: I'm not speaking for everybody now. Just myself.  
18  
19 Launius: Ok. You mentioned building the towers at the lighthouse, that thing right  
20 there. Setting short poles and installing switchboards.  
21  
22 Belcher: I didn't install switchboard. That's part of the whole unit but that wasn't my job.  
23  
24 Launius: Ok  
25

1 Belcher: That's other people. There were 43 other people down here. That the  
2 switchboard was their job, UHF, VHF, radar, that was others in our outfit.

3  
4 Launius: Ok. So was there, maybe you can tell us a little bit how that system worked.  
5 Was there a switchboard operator in place, that would take the calls and plug them into  
6 those things.

7  
8 Belcher: Eventually.

9  
10 Launius: That's how it worked. Do you have any idea at what point that might have  
11 been put into place when they had operational system.

12  
13 Belcher: No, I have no idea. Truly, I have no idea.

14  
15 Launius: Ok. Not while you were here though, apparently.

16  
17 Belcher: Oh yes, it had to be when I was here.

18  
19 Launius: Ok.

20  
21 Belcher: Because we were here when the thing went off.

22  
23 Launius: Uh uh. The communication system that they had for the Bumper project,  
24 there's several pieces that are scattered out around and they all had to talk to each  
25

1 other. Do you have a sense of how that worked? Did it all go through a central  
2 switchboard?

3  
4 Belcher: Must, I don't know, but it had to be, got to go through a switchboard at  
5 someplace.

6  
7 Launius: Ok

8  
9 Belcher: Depending how much lines were going through it, who it was to, you know.  
10 What outfit it was to.

11  
12 Launius: Ok

13  
14 Belcher: It covers a multitude of sins.

15  
16 Launius: Alright, fair enough. There was your group doing the communications.

17  
18 Belcher: Right.

19  
20 Launius: There was other groups doing other things.

21  
22 Belcher: There was also other groups doing communications down here.

23  
24 Launius: Oh, there was other groups doing communications as well?

1 Belcher: I think so.

2

3 Launius: Did you interact with any other these other groups?

4

5 Belcher: No, no.

6

7 Launius: Not at all?

8

9 Belcher: No.

10

11 Launius: So the guys that were putting the rocket up that was just a group off to  
12 themselves and you really didn't talk to them very much.

13

14 Belcher: No.

15

16 Launius: You didn't exchange ideas or anything?

17

18 Belcher: No.

19

20 Launius: Ok. When you finished a day's work did you head back to the barracks, did  
21 you go out on the town?

22

23 Belcher: Well, we had to wash up a little bit it was kind of hot out there, with the sand in  
24 your shoes. Yeah, we went to town.

25

1 Launius: Where did you go?

2

3 Belcher: Well, the Dunn Hotel.

4

5 Launius: The Dunn Hotel

6

7 Belcher: Which was in Melbourne and the Coconut Room was the bar, Miss Sadie  
8 Dunn owned it. And I used to go there.

9

10 Launius: Alright.

11

12 Belcher: And after I got married, I took my dog there. He'd have his ashtray full of beer.

13

14 Launius: You took your dog? Well, that's interesting

15

16 Belcher: Laughter.

17

18 Launius: That went over well at the bar?

19

20 Belcher: Sure, it was a Pekinese, you might say.

21

22 Launius: Alright. Can you recall other individuals who were in your outfit, any stories or  
23 anything like that, that might be of interest.

24

25 Belcher: No, 'cause I haven't seen any of those people since we parted.

1  
2 Launius: Ok.

3  
4 Belcher: Well, a couple of them I've seen. And I lost one of them at Christmas time.

5  
6 Launius: Ok.

7  
8 Belcher: I seen one in New Jersey for awhile but what they're doing or where they went  
9 I don't...see none of us were in an outfit. We came from here there everywhere to  
10 make up this outfit.

11  
12 Launius: Ok, alright. In terms of, living accommodations and things of this nature. You  
13 said you got married down here.

14  
15 Belcher: Hmm.

16  
17 Launius: What was it like to live in this particular area at that time? Where houses  
18 readily available?

19  
20 Belcher: No, we never had a house, no, no. We had a room where my wife stayed  
21 because she worked in Melbourne and I stayed at the base. And Saturdays I'd go  
22 home or something because the availability of transportation was none.

23  
24 Launius: Ok, so you didn't have an automobile at that point?  
25



1 Belcher: No. We did for awhile but that's another story.

3 Launius: Ok.

5 Belcher: But we got around alright.

7 Launius: You mentioned the bar, was there other things to do? Where there movies  
8 or?

10 Belcher: Oh yeah, there was a movie house down there and after my wife had a car,  
11 we'd used go down to Vero to the drive in, you know, nights, get back around 1:00 go to  
12 the beach, park the car, go swimming for a couple of hours in the moonlight.

14 Launius: Ok, alright

16 Belcher: I spend, once in a while going to Jacksonville or Orlando.

18 Launius: Trip to the big city.

20 Belcher: Ummm.

22 Launius: The launch of Bumper 8, did you actually see that?

24 Belcher: No

1 Launius: Did you see any of the launches that took place out here at that time?

2  
3 Belcher: No, we didn't stay long after the launch was over we went back to our unit, in  
4 New Jersey.

5  
6 Launius: Ok, alright. What time did you go back?

7  
8 Belcher: What time did we go back?

9  
10 Launius: Was it July or August?

11  
12 Belcher: Yes, it was July, yes, right away.

13  
14 Launius: Right after the launch.

15  
16 Belcher: Yes.

17  
18 Launius: So when did you come back down here?

19  
20 Belcher: When did I come back down here? Thirty one years ago.

21  
22 Launius: Ok. Alright. In the intervening 31 years, what were some of the key changes  
23 that you noticed?

24  
25 Belcher: That I made?

1  
2 Launius: That you noticed between the Cape in the 1950 and about 1970 or so.

3  
4 Belcher: Mostly the prices! Laughter.

5  
6 Launius: The prices?

7  
8 Belcher: The property. The property was beautiful, beautiful property that you could  
9 buy here. You know yourself that in 1950 there wasn't much here other than the road  
10 and the bridges were bad. But they had some nice places they had built along the river  
11 if you could afford them.

12  
13 Launius: Ummm

14  
15 Belcher: But we looked but I was still in the service and had years to go yet. My wife &  
16 I both decided that some day we would return.

17  
18 Launius: Ok. Alright. Are there any other impressions of this particular area that you  
19 would like to share with us from that 1950 or so period.

20  
21 Belcher: Well, I like the area now it's not bad but of course, I like it better before. There  
22 was not too much here. It was real nice. The people were nice, fishing was good, the  
23 shrimps were excellent.

24  
25 Launius: Oh yeah?

1  
2 Belcher: But it was alright. But now it's getting an over abundance of people, that's for  
3 sure.

4  
5 Launius: Uh uh

6  
7 Belcher: Out to the base but you've got to expect that with the.

8  
9 Launius: Yeah.

10  
11 Belcher: But it's a great thing we had what we have out there. Great.

12  
13 Launius: Did you find the locals friendly and inviting when you arrived in 1950? Or did  
14 they look askance on you as a Yankee and a GI?

15  
16 Belcher: Well, not on me anyway. I got along good with them down here. Of course, a  
17 lot of the people we met were like we were, they were foreigners down here. They  
18 weren't people that lived here all their life.

19  
20 Launius: Ok. Alright. Florida was a segregated state in 1950.

21  
22 Belcher: It didn't bother me though.

23  
24 Launius: Ok. Did you see instances of it when you were here?

1 Belcher: No.

2

3 Launius: Where you involved in some of the atomic bomb tests out in Nevada?

4

5 Belcher: Yes.

6

7 Launius: Would you tell us a little about that?

8

9 Belcher: We went out in May about '55. For a three day trip that lasted 21 days. But  
10 we finally got it off. It was beautiful weather except at night it was real cold. Because of  
11 the sub stratosphere they kept delaying it till they got the right, what they wanted to go  
12 and they we went.

13

14 Launius: And this is the Trinity test?

15

16 Belcher: Pardon?

17

18 Launius: This is the Trinity test?

19

20 Belcher: It was a 25 kiloton shot from the pole. It was 5 May 1955.

21

22 Launius: Ok. Alright.

23

24 Belcher: '55. We were three miles out in the trench.

25

1 Launius: Ok. You have some specific questions? No. Ok. I've got a question here that  
2 I've got to ask you because I have no idea what it is. Are you similar with an  
3 establishment called the Chatterbox?  
4

5 Belcher: That must a drinking establishment that only thing I can figure out in Cocoa or  
6 somewhere. If it's there I wouldn't see it anyway because when my work was finished I  
7 came straight south to Melbourne. So really I never messed around with anything up  
8 there that wasn't part of our duties. I had been all through Merritt Island and Cocoa  
9 and all that because we had to check out some of the antennas and wire but otherwise I  
10 didn't go there at all. I liked the Dunn Hotel.  
11

12 Launius: Laughter. Alright, that's fine. Are there any other specific things you would  
13 like to add about Bumper or about the area or about launching rockets?  
14

15 Belcher: Well, of course, I almost forgot about such a thing as the launch right? We  
16 were released of duty after it. Some of these people lived with it for the rest of their  
17 lives. So I don't really know what to say about it. Great that it happened that's for sure.  
18 But when we were down here I don't think it was too on our minds at all. Not in mine,  
19 anyway. Some people asked me about it. That's why I thought more about the atomic  
20 bomb going off, in my memory was a great thing. But you know, now I find out that this  
21 is just as great.  
22

23 Launius: Ok, anything from anyone?  
24

25 Stan Starr: Where were you for the actual launch?

1  
2 Belcher: (Laughter) Where was I when it launched?

3  
4 Starr: Yes.

5  
6 Belcher: In that little old house.

7  
8 Starr: The safety center?

9  
10 Belcher: Yes, the safety center.

11  
12 Starr: You were asleep?

13  
14 Belcher: Yup. Laughter

15  
16 Launius: Ok.

17  
18 Belcher: What that was.. Do you know what a radio shack is?

19  
20 Launius: Sure.

21  
22 Belcher: Well, that's what we had out there. We had a switchboard in our crew and we  
23 were. I can't remember how many. A lot of stuff just doesn't stay with me. We were  
24 there for wires they needed communication. We were there on 24 hour alert. But even  
25

1 if we stood out there we wouldn't have seen it. It was going the wrong direction for us.  
2 I'm glad it didn't go our way.

3  
4 Starr: You were out to the west.

5  
6 Belcher: Yeah.

7  
8 Launius: Ok. Well, thank you very much that's all the questions that I had. If you have  
9 any. Or Elaine?

10  
11 Elaine Liston: Do you remember how they got the name Bumper?

12  
13 Belcher: What?

14  
15 Starr: Do you know where the name Bumper came from?

16  
17 Belcher: No, where did it come from?

18  
19 Launius: We don't know, we're trying to find out. Laughter

20  
21 Starr: Sounds like the opening of a joke, doesn't it?

22  
23 Belcher: Yes. Bumper, Bumper, Bumper. No I don't know. That came from California,  
24 didn't it? Isn't that where it all started?



1 Starr: White Sands

2  
3 Belcher: White Sands, it didn't start here. Because you had all those out there that you  
4 were trying to shoot.

5  
6 Launius: Ok, well, thank you very much I appreciate your willingness to come over.

7  
8 Belcher: But you know, like I say. You never know what's going to happen until it  
9 happens. Whoever thought today, it would be like it is. Like I said before we were  
10 down here to do a job, that's it. We did it and went back to our home station. And then  
11 have places to have a beer besides one.

12  
13 Launius: Ok. Thank you.